

Allied Health Grand Opening - Rita Cepeda

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ALLIED HEALTH BUILDING GRAND OPENING

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Welcome to a day we have all been waiting for, the Grand Opening of the San Diego Mesa College Allied Health Building. When our Board of Trustees, students, faculty and staff went to the taxpayers in San Diego to seek support for the passage of Propositions S and N to modernize our infrastructure, repair existing facilities and build out the footprint of our colleges and continuing education, we did so on the premise that the return on investment for each of these facilities would be manifold. The Master Plans we developed carefully documented the educational, economic and ultimately societal benefit to our students, their families and the entire region. No single building illustrates the fact that we have made good on that promise than the facility we are dedicating today. In fact, the Allied Health Building began to amaze us on the very first day of the Fall semester. I cannot convey to you the excitement on that day as our students and faculty began to work with the highly specialized equipment installed in this facility.

In 2006, the San Diego Workforce partnership released a report, *Careers in San Diego's Healthcare Sector: A Healthy Future*. This publication included information on sector trends, firms, employment, occupations, wages and career ladder opportunities, along with 42 occupational profiles. It clearly quantified the increased demand for health services throughout our region because of the size of current population and anticipated growth overall, exacerbated by the mushrooming aging baby boomers. It is estimated that between 2005 and 2030 the population over 65 in San Diego will grow by roughly 850,000; this is an increase of 128 %.)--I won't ask how many of us fit that demographic. This report was particularly welcome here at Mesa College because it reaffirmed the fact that each of the six allied health programs

(Animal Health Tech. Dental Assisting Health Inf. Tech., Medical Assisting, Phys. Therapist Asst. ,Radiologic Technology) offered were part of the set of high demand high wage careers featured in the study. One of the tables in that report identified the following allied health occupations as having the "greatest employment profile" in San Diego including: RNs, Nursing aides, orderlies and Attendants, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, Dental Assistants, Medical Assistants, Home Health Aides, Dental Hygienists, Physical Therapists, Medical records and Health Information Technologies and Radiologic Technologists and Technicians. I am pleased to report that between Mesa College, City College, Miramar College and Continuing Education, the San Diego Community College District has covered the entire waterfront – no pun intended.

Another very interesting factor and one that I point out to audiences that include representatives of four-year colleges and universities is that in that same report the outlook for wages listed the median wage for a dental hygienist at \$87,000 compared to a School Psychologist (Masters Degree) listed at \$58,000.

There are two other important factors I wish to point out in association with the immense collateral benefit represented by this facility. The first it is also one of the best sources to address the need for diversity in the health professions. Perhaps no other profession has done more to recognize the critical aspect of cultural competence in the ability to perform than the health professions.

In June 2008, The California Endowment produced a report entitled, Allied Health Workforce Analysis: San Diego Region focusing on “achieving a culturally competent health care workforce” in the field of allied health. An analysis of the current population noted for example that the San Diego Region’ Latino population is much younger than that for other racial/ethnic groups. In 2006, the Latino median age was 26, four years younger than that of any other group. The report projected that between 2005 and 2030, the region’s current population of 6 million would grow by 1.6 and that an estimated 95% of the projected population increases would come from Latinos (75%) and Asians (20%).

Community colleges, by their very nature represent the most diverse institutions of higher learning in this state and in this nation. Their open access and expressed focus is fertile ground as a source of individuals with great multicultural and multilingual capabilities.

The other is our ability to partner with representatives from the health industry; including great research institutions, hospitals, laboratories and the surrounding health facilities in our region. Our partners have great vested interest in the quality of our programs and in the trained professionals we prepare. In all instances they eagerly participate with us in the placement of these individuals as interns as they enable our students to gain the required field experience needed. Ultimately, of course, they hire our graduates.

In this facility, we have been true to our word. San Diego taxpayers supporting our efforts have made it possible to create an asset that responds to growing health care needs, grows the economy and provides opportunities to a diverse pool of students and future health professionals. Thanks San Diego, thanks to the vision of our Board of Trustees of the San Diego Community College District, our Chancellor Dr. Constance Carroll and the faculty, students and staff of San Diego Mesa College.